

WHAT'S NEW IN THE PACIFIC

NOUMEA

FOUR RESEARCHERS from the French Institute for Research Development (IRD) and SPC have published a guide to Ciguatera seafood poisoning. The title, *Ciguatera, A Field Reference Guide*, describes environmental issues and the economic damage it can cause to coastal fisheries. Ciguatera poisoning results from eating fish that contain toxins called ciguatoxins. Thousands of cases have been reported in the Pacific over the past 20 years. The book is the third part of a regional awareness campaign that began 2 years ago, with a poster and a leaflet.

Jean-Paul Gaudechoux, Dominique Laurent
Pacific News Bulletin Vol. 19 (12), 2005

TEGUA ISLAND, VANUATU

LATEU SETTLEMENT ON TEGUA Island has been abandoned due to rising sea levels and "king tides." The village was moved to higher ground; coconut palms already are standing in water. Residents of the Cantaret Islands, off the coast of Papua New Guinea, are moving to nearby Bougainville, and two Kiribati islands, Tebua Tarawa and Abanuea, disappeared under water in 1999.

Pacific News Bulletin, Vol. 19 (12), 2005

FIJI

THE MARINE STUDIES program at USP conducted a workshop on the rehabilitation and beneficial use of coral ecosystems. The program was initiated in France in 2002 and has several components, with the goal to protect and manage coral reefs in the Pacific.

USP Beat Vol. 6 (4), 2006

FIJI WILL HOST the third Melanesian Arts and Cultural Festival from 2-10 October, 2006, in Suva. Participants are from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and New Caledonia.

USP Beat, Vol. 6 (4), 2006

THE US DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, Fish and Wildlife Service awarded a grant of FJD \$20,000 to the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Marine Resources. The grant is specifically for the Marine Turtle Conservation Project and it will assist USP to work with governments and communities in Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu to help conserve the highly endangered turtle.

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A COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECT on the island of Gau is helping sustainable development. The School of Marine Studies and the University of the South Pacific hope to encourage people to manage their marine resources and protect the environment. There is concern over depleted coral reef fisheries and resource mismanagement. Fish poisoning (as a means of fishing) has been banned and now some land issues are being targeted, such as waste disposal. Gau has unlogged forest cover in its interior where endemic birds are found. But peo-

ple are altering the environment as modernization and development take place. The French government gave a FJD\$10,000 grant to start cattle farming in one community.

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INVASIVE SPECIES THREATEN the biodiversity of island ecosystems. Any foreign species introduced into a new island environment can be devastating, threatening agriculture public health, tourism, etc. As we know by many disastrous introductions, they cause damage to indigenous species, plant communities, and the health of the inhabitants.

The Nature Conservancy has joined with the University of the South Pacific and other environmental organizations to work on the problems of the management of invasive species. At a meeting held in Palau, members drafted a prioritized Action Plan: For American Samoa, eradication of strawberry guava by 2008; Guam, control of bud rot on Betel nut; Niue, reduction of the weed wedelia; Palau, eliminating Kebeas from the margin of forests; Pohnpei, eradication of particular weeds (false Kava, mile-a-minute, ivy gourd, and chain of love) by 2008; and for Samoa, to secure funding to manage and prevent future invasive species.

USP Beat, Vol. 6(10), 2006.

PITCAIRN ISLAND

WE HAVE A PACIFIC MYSTERY! Where are the \$20.3 million worth of exports the U.S Census Bureau's Division of Foreign Trade statistics show as going to remote Pitcairn Island in the past 10 years? In 2002, the 10-year period studied showed that \$6,082,742 worth of goods were sent from various states in the US to Pitcairn. In 1997 and 1998 the stats show no exports to Pitcairn, and by 2005 total exports were down to \$456,290 from \$2.3 million in 2004. Some of the more than 90 exports by type, said by the Census Bureau to have been sent to Pitcairn, include perfume, cosmetics, etc., of a value worth \$89,914, supposedly shipped to the 50 people on the island in 2005. No one Pitcairn has any knowledge of these "shipments".

One official who was contacted suggested that the exports might have been used on Pitcairn as raw material to manufacture its own exports to other countries and that could be the reason for "the confusion." But Pitcairn's only "exports" are postage stamps, small shipments of dehydrated fruits and veggies, and a relatively small amount of some of the world's purest honey. According to the Census Bureau's statistics, California, Florida, and New York were the largest exporters in terms of dollar amount to Pitcairn, but even the District of Columbia is said to have exported \$37,650 in goods to the island in 2002. Thirty of the 50 states exported goods to Pitcairn Island at some time during the 1996 - 2005 period. *But this just never happened.* Is it another case of untrustworthy governmental statistics? Are the States lying to the Census Bureau statisticians about what and to where they export products?

The Pitcairn Commissioner's office in Auckland, New Zealand, who pays for all corporate purchases for the five square kilometer island, wrote no checks for any such imports to the island. (Being the smallest protectorate of the United

Kingdom, Pitcairn buys most of its off-island needs from New Zealand; practically nothing is purchased from the U.S.) Most islanders have their own gardens for vegetables and fruits, and catch fish so a relatively small amount of food-stuffs are imported.

Herbert Ford, director of the Pitcairn Islands Study Center, came upon this discrepancy in a recent news story that stated Wisconsin exported \$47,925 worth of goods to Pitcairn in 2005. He noted that they will likely never learn the answer if the responses to his appeals for information are any indication. Telephone calls brought no answer and requests for information went unanswered.

April 5, 2006. *Pitcairn Islands Study Center, Pacific Union College, 1 Angwin Avenue, Angwin, CA 94508*
<http://library.puc.edu/pitcairn/>

NEW ZEALAND

PRO-WHALING NATIONS WON THE VOTE at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) after four Pacific Island nations sided with Japan. They voted on a resolution stating that a 20 year moratorium on commercial whale hunting was "no longer necessary" and blamed the whales for depleting fish stocks. The non-binding resolution passed 33 votes to 32 and was a political victory for Japan and its allies, which hope to return to commercial whaling.

New Zealand Conservation Minister, Chris Carter, stated that the vote was a warning to the world: "It's a wakeup call to the rest of the world that the whales that we thought were safe are not." And Japan would continue "buying" votes from poor countries through generous aid packages until they defeat the moratorium. Carter expressed disappointment with the Pacific Island nations that sided with Japan: Solomons, Tuvalu, Kiribati, and Nauru had previously told him they would not vote in favor of overturning the moratorium. New Zealand has gone "the extra mile" for many of these nations, and Carter stated that it was reasonable to expect some goodwill in return. Greenpeace condemned the resolution and in particular the view that whales were responsible for destroying fish stocks.

USP Beat Magazine, Vol. 6 (9), 2006.

ABERDEEN (SCOTLAND) UNIVERSITY'S Marischal Museum will return nine tattooed Maori heads that they have been storing for more than a century. The Te Papa Museum in Wellington, New Zealand, asked for the return of the heads so it could conduct its own research.

Arizona Republic, 20 July 2006

WHAT'S NEW IN HANGA ROA

THE RETURN OF MR UGLY

A SERIOUSLY UGLY *moai* with a nose like that of Jimmy Durante's has been shipped back to the island. A visual artist from Argentina, Rosa Velasco, returned it as a "matter of reparation." The 1.45 m tall *moai* originally was a gift from Easter Island to the Chilean president, Carlos Ibañez del Campo in the 1920s, and was transported to the mainland.



President Ibañez gave it to his wife's brother-in-law, Carlos Ossandon. Next, Rosa Velasco's father bought it and later tried to sell it through a dealer in Holland. The statue was sent to Amsterdam and Velasco was given a US\$30,000 warrant check. The Dutch never sent the money and when several Polynesian experts declared it to be a modern carving, Mr Velasco was accused of trying to sell a fake. A long legal process began. Over the years, one of the lawyers who represented Velasco was found dead and the other simply disappeared (these were troubled times in Argentina). The *moai* was retained at the customs office in Buenos Aires for 10 years and subsequently bought at auction by a pharmacist. Rosa Velasco paid the pharmacist US\$3000 for the statue, for "sentimental reasons" and stored it at the house of some of Rosa's friends in Buenos Aires for another 20 years.

Now it is back on Rapa Nui. The *moai rake rake* ("ugly statue"), as islanders call it, was declared to be Hinariru (the first king) by the mayor! Then another islander said that he dreamed that the statue came from the land where the Hanga-roa Hotel is located. With that as "evidence," they were able to get the owners of the hotel to pay for flying it over to the island. Not only is it poorly made and seriously ugly, the iconography is all wrong. The arms are crossed on the upper